

THE HERFORD
ÆSOP



Fifty Fables in Verse

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Fifty fables in verse

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THE LION AND THE MOUSE (PAGE 75)

THE HERFORD ÆSOP

Fifty Fables in Verse

BY

OLIVER HERFORD

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

THE AUTHOR

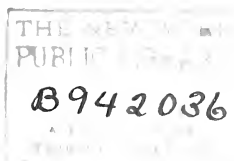


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A

To

PAUL M. HERZOG, JR.

WILLIAM
CLARK
YOUNG

MR. HERFORD asks me to write the preface for this book. Æsop was a wise man of old who wrote in Greek, which only a few of us read easily nowadays. Æsop wrote what we call fables, a fable being a good story which can't be true but which may teach a great truth. Æsop could do that sort of thing well, but I'm not sure Mr. Herford doesn't do it even better. Mr. Herford certainly has taken Mr. Æsop's old Greek fables and written them over into English which you and I have joy in reading. He has made pictures, too, for the fables, that give us a happy feeling of personal friendship with all the characters in the book.

You will like to read these fables, and before you know it you will find that you have taken very pleasantly a dose of good common sense, of which most of us need more than we ever get. The happy time you are going to have with this little book you owe at least as much to Mr. Herford as to Mr. Æsop. Shall we say, Thank you, Mr. Herford, for introducing us so delightfully to Mr. Æsop? At least, I do.

C. H. THURBER

P.S. Mr. Æsop wrote many more than fifty fables; perhaps you and I can persuade Mr. Herford to write more too.

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THE HERFORD ÆSOP

FIFTY FABLES IN VERSE



THE DOG AND THE WOLF

A LAZY Dog that sleeping lay
Outside the farmyard gate, one day,
Woke with a sudden start, to see
A fierce Wolf glaring hungrily,
Gruesome and grisly, gaunt and grim,
And just about to spring on him.
“O Wolf!” exclaimed the frightened Pup,

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“One word before you eat me up!
Observe how very small and thin
I am; ’t would really be a sin
To eat me now. Indeed I’m quite
Unworthy of your appetite.
Tomorrow Master gives a treat,
And I shall have so much to eat
That if you’ll wait a day or two
I’ll make a bigger meal for you!”
The Wolf agreed and went away;
But when on the appointed day
He came again to claim his right,
He found the farmyard gate shut tight,
And Doggie on the other side.
“What does this mean? Come out!” he cried.
Loud laughed the Dog, “It means,” said he,
“I’m wiser than I used to be!”



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THE FARMER AND THE SNAKE

○ NE winter's day a Farmer found
A Serpent stretched upon the ground
Lifeless and stiff. Touched by the sight
Of the poor frozen creature's plight,
He bore it home with him and there
Brought it to life, with warmth and care.
No sooner was the Serpent quite
Recovered, than it sprang to bite
The good man's hand. "So that's the way,"
Exclaimed the Farmer, "you repay
A friendly turn!" With that, he plied
His stick till he was satisfied,
Beyond a doubt, *this time* the Snake
Was really dead and no mistake.

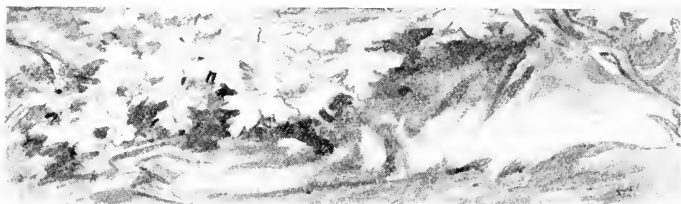
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THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER

 BUSY Ant one summer day
Was storing grains of wheat away
For winter food. A Grasshopper
Paused in his song to laugh at her.
“Why do you work so hard?” said he,
“Summer’s the time for jollity!”
The Ant said nothing. By and by
Came winter with the frowning sky
And frozen meadows; came also
The Grasshopper, with tale of woe.
“Help me, for pity’s sake!” cried he.
“No,” said the Ant, “you mocked at me
Last summer; now you ask to share
My harvest. All I have to spare
Is GOOD ADVICE: Exchange your gift
Of song and dance for honest thrift!”



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THE DEER AND THE VINE

A STAG, exhausted by the chase,
Discovered for a hiding place
A Vine whose leaves so thickly grew
They hid him from the Hunter's view.
Here, thinking now the danger past,
And hungry from his all-day fast,
He nibbled at the leaves, which made
A rustling that at once betrayed
Where he was hidden. Peering through
The Vine, the Hunter found and slew
The Stag, who thus was justly paid
For hurting leaves that gave him aid.

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THE OLD LION

A LION, old and powerless,
Lay on the ground in sore distress,
Nigh unto death. Seeing his plight
A Boar, recalling an old slight,
Stabbed him as he defenseless lay,
With vengeful tusk, and ran away.
Soon after came a Bull, who bore
Resentment for an unpaid score,
And gored, by way of punishment,
The Lion to his heart's content.
An Ass, who had observed all this,
Thought, "Here's a chance too good to miss!"

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And with his hind heels, just for spite,
Let drive at him with all his might.
At that, with an expiring roar,
The Lion cried, "Unmoved I bore
The insults of the Boar and Bull.
But now, indeed, my cup is full!
From you, a beast of meanest breed,
To suffer this is death indeed!"

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THE FOX AND THE LION

A FOX who never, strange to say,
Had seen the King of Beasts, one day
Beheld a Lion. At the sight
He very nearly died of fright.
The second time he met the King
He felt a sort of shivering
Sensation up and down his spine,
But outwardly betrayed no sign.
The third time they met face to face
The Fox showed not the slightest trace
Of fear, but bold as anything
Walked up and said, "Good morning, King!"

The Herford Æsop



THE FISHERMAN AND THE LITTLE FISH

A FISHERMAN at close of day,
Counting his catch, to his dismay
Found one small Fish was all the spoil
Resulting from his hard day's toil.
With gaping mouth and piteous stare
The Fish implored the Man to spare
His life. "I am so small," said he,
"If you'll return me to the sea,
I shall grow bigger by and by
And worth your while to catch." "Not I!"
Replied the Fisherman. "I know
Too much to let a Small Fish go
Because there possibly may be
A big Fish somewhere in the sea."

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THE GNAT AND THE BULLOCK

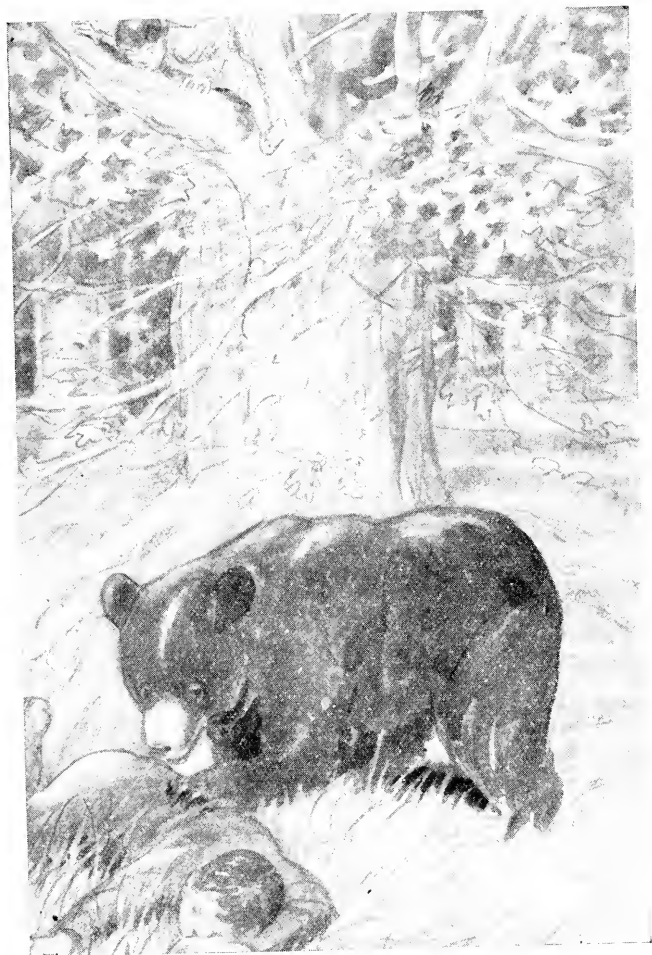
A GNAT, once chancing to alight,
After a long and weary flight,
Upon a Bullock's horn to rest,
With a loud buzzing thus addressed
The Bullock, "Pray, good Sir, allow
Me to express my thanks; and now
If you don't mind, I'll fly away,
Unless you'd rather have me stay."
"Pray do whatever you decide;
'Tis all the same to me," replied
The Bullock; "I was not aware,
Until you spoke, that you were there."

The Herford Æsop



THE BEAR AND THE TWO TRAVELERS

TWO friends, when walking in a wood,
Met with a Bear. One, who was good
At climbing, quickly climbed a tree;
The other, not so spry as he,
Dropped on the ground, and when the Bear
Came up and sniffed his face and hair



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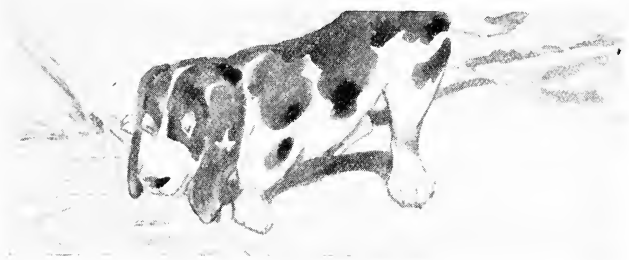
With curious snout, he held his breath
And saved his life by feigning death;
For Bruin will not touch, 'tis said,
A body that he thinks is dead.

Soon as the Bear was gone, the man
Who climbed the tree came down and ran
To join his comrade. "Well," said he,
"What did the Bear say? From my tree
I saw him whispering in your ear."

"He told me, since you wish to hear,"
Replied the other, "to steer clear
Of friends who flee when danger's near;
He will not have to tell me twice.
I'm going to take that Bear's advice."



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THE DOG AND HIS SHADOW

A DOG, with a choice bit of meat
That he was carrying home to eat,
Crossing a bridge, saw in the brook
His own reflection, which he took
To be another Dog. "The Pig!
His piece of meat is twice as big
As mine! Well, I'll soon let him see
Which is the better Dog!" cried he;
And dropping his, without ado,
To grab the other's meat he flew.
Meanwhile his own sank out of sight;
Thus he lost both, which served him right!

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THE OX AND THE FROG

AN OX, not heeding, as he chewed
His midday cud, stepped on a brood
Of little Frogs, and all were crushed
Save one, who, panic-stricken, rushed
To tell his mother how there came
A great huge beast with eyes like flame

The Herford Æsop

And cloven feet, and crushed to death
Her children. As he paused for breath,
“Was it as big as this?” said she,
Puffing herself out monstrously;
“Or this? or this?” “Oh, mother, spare
Yourself! You might as well compare
A Puffball to the Pyramid,”
Cried he. “If you don’t have a care
You’ll burst!” And sure enough she did.



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THE MAN AND THE LION

A LION and a Man, as they
Were walking in a park one day,
Exchanging stories of their strength
And deeds of valor, came at length
Upon the statue of a Man

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Slaying a Lion. Then began
A wrangle. Said the Man, "I call
That true to nature." "Not at all!"
The Lion roared. "You think it true
Because it shows Man's point of view.
If it were mine, the Man would not
Be seen!" Exclaimed the other, "What!
No Man at all?" "Oh, yes," replied
The Lion, "he would be *inside*!"

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THE LION AND THE FOX

A LION that had grown too weak
With age to leave his den to seek
For food, foreseeing now that he
Must get his meals by strategy,
Lay down, pretending to be sick.
The beasts, not dreaming 'twas a trick,
And thinking one so near his end
No harm could possibly intend,
Flocked to condole, alas! to learn
The truth too late, as each in turn
Was gobbled up. The Fox, less prone
To trust appearances, alone
Saw through the trick and stayed outside.
“Come in, I beg,” the Lion cried.
“Thanks,” said the Fox, “but I prefer
To stay without. I notice, Sir,
That all the footprints hereabout
Go toward your den, and none come out!”





THE EAGLE AND THE ARROW

AN EAGLE, following a Hare,
Lit on a rock. While perching there,
A hunter, on the watch for game,
Spied him and taking careful aim
Shot from his bow a winged dart
That pierced the Eagle thro' the heart.
As from his side he strove to draw
The dart, the stricken creature saw
Its feather came from his own wing.
"Alas! Death has a double sting!"
Cried he, "for all too late I know
'Tis my own Pride that lays me low!"



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THE DOE AND THE LION

A DOE, pursued by dogs, to save
Her life took refuge in a cave.
Picture her consternation when
It proved to be a Lion's den,
And her unspeakable dismay
To find it was the Lion's day
"At home." He hailed her with delight.
"My dear," said he, "you are a sight
For hungry eyes!" "Alas!" cried she,
"That this should be the end of me!
Only escaping Man's pursuit
To be devoured by a Brute!"

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THE WIND AND THE SUN

THE Wind and Sun once fell into
A heated argument, which grew
Each day more bitter. Wind and Sun
Each claimed to be the stronger one.

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Finding that neither one would make
The least concession, for the sake
Of peace the two agreed at length
Upon a trial of their strength.
“You see that Traveler,” said the Sun,
“On yonder road; whichever one
The sooner forces him to strip
His cloak off, wins the Championship!”
The Wind, rejoicing in a fight,
Sprang up and blew with all his might;
Quite confident that he would win,
But very soon, to his chagrin,
He found the harder that he blew,
The Traveler more tightly drew
His cloak about him. One last puff
He gave, then shouted in a huff,
“I give it up, it can’t be done!”
Then, with a smile, arose the Sun
And beamed his brightest on the Man,
So that he presently began
To feel his cloak. Then bit by bit,

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As he grew warmer, loosened it.
At last he threw it off. "You win!"
Exclaimed the Wind. "I now begin
To see the Light! I thought till now
That everything to FORCE must bow;
But you compel me to admit
PERSUASION has the best of it!"



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THE MILLER AND HIS SON AND THEIR ASS

A MILLER and his Son one day,
As they were trudging on their way
To sell their Donkey at the fair,
Passed by a group of girls. "Look there!
At those two simpletons!" one cried,
"Who walk when there's a beast to ride!"
The Miller hearing, bade his Son
Get on the Donkey's back. This done,

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Proceeding on their way again
They met a party of old men,
Discoursing gravely. "There!" cried one,
"Look at that good-for-nothing son
Who rides and lets his father go
On foot. — You rascal! have you no
Respect for Age? no filial pride?
Get off and let the old man ride!"
Without a word the boy obeyed
And, leaping from the Donkey, made
His father take his place and ride
While he ran by the Donkey's side.
As thus they journeyed merrily,
Along there came a company
Of womenfolk and children, who
Set up a terrible to-do,
"Have you no heart?" the women cried;
"A great, strong man like you to ride
And let your son, poor little man,
Keep pace with you as best he can!"
The Miller, naturally kind,

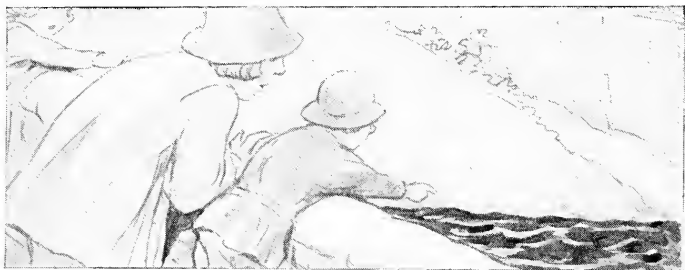
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At this, took up his Son behind ;
And on the Donkey's back the pair
Rode on to town. When almost there,
A Stranger, in ill-natured tone,
Accosted them, "Pray do you own
That Donkey, Sir?" "Most certainly!"
Replied the Miller. "Well," said he,
"One would not think so by the way
You load him! If I had my say,
I'd make the pair of you alight
And carry him!" "Perhaps you're right;
It is the only thing," replied
The Miller, "that we have not tried.
We aim to please." So then and there
Dismounting, that obliging pair
Tied the poor Donkey's feet and slung
Him to a pole from which he hung,
Braying his protest, upside down,
And started with him to the town
Upon their shoulders. At the sight
The townsfolk, shouting with delight,



The Herford Æsop

Came flocking round on every side,
Until the Donkey, terrified,
Just as they reached a bridge, broke through
The cords and tumbled off into
The river and was swept away.
Thus did the foolish Miller pay
For trying to please everyone;
He lost his Donkey and pleased none.





THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

A THIRSTY Fox once saw some fine
Ripe Grapes that hung on a tall vine.
“Just what I’m longing for!” cried he,
And sprang to get them eagerly.
Alas! the clusters hung so high
He could not reach them. By and by,
Finding his efforts all in vain,
His longing turned into disdain;
“They’re only fit,” snarled he, “for Apes.
What do I want with Sour Grapes!”

The Herford Æsop

THE ASS AND THE IMAGE

AN ASS once carried through the town
A precious Image of renown
Upon his back. Observing how
The crowds upon the streets would bow
Their heads devoutly as he passed
He thought they bowed to him. "At last!"
Brayed he, "the world has come to see
My wisdom, my nobility,
My majesty, my *strength of will!*"
Reflecting thus, the Ass stood still;
Nor would he stir a step until
In angry tones the driver cried,
"Get up, you lazy beast!" and plied
His whip. "Maybe you think it's you
The people there are bowing to!
Things have come to a pretty pass
When folks turn out to laud an ASS!"



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THE KID AND THE WOLF

A KID, safe in a hayloft high,
Laughed at a Wolf that happened by;
“Well,” said the Wolf, “I must admit
Up there you have the best of it;
But let the Hayloft have its due,
'Tis the Loft laughs at me, not you;
If you don't think so, try your wit
Down here, and see who laughs at it!”

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THE STAG AND THE LION

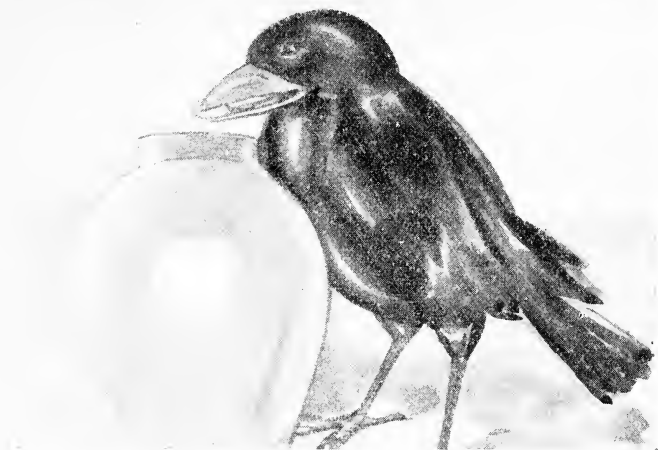
A STAG came to a pool to drink
And, bending o'er the mossy brink,
Beheld as in a mirror bright
His shapely image. At the sight
Of his great antlers, spreading wide
In graceful curves, he swelled with pride;
But when he looked upon his long,
Thin legs, it seemed a cruel wrong
That one with horns so fierce and grand
Upon such spindle legs should stand.



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While thus he mused, it came to pass
A Lion hiding in the grass
Sprang out at him. The spindle shanks
So late despised now earned his thanks;
Alas, in vain! — for even as he thought
The foe outstripped, a low branch caught
His horns and held him till his fate
O’ertook him, thus he learned too late
How his best points he had despised,
To be betrayed by those he prized.

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THE CROW AND THE WATER JAR

A THIRSTY Crow once found a Jar
That held some water, but 'twas far
Too narrow necked, and much too low
The water was, for Master Crow
With his short neck to get a drink.
The Crow then set himself to think —
At last upon a plan he hit.

The Herford Æsop

“Since I cannot reach down to it,
I must invent some way,” said he,
“To make the water rise to me.”
With little pebbles, one by one,
He filled the Jar; as this was done
The water rose and rose, until
The thirsty Crow could drink his fill.

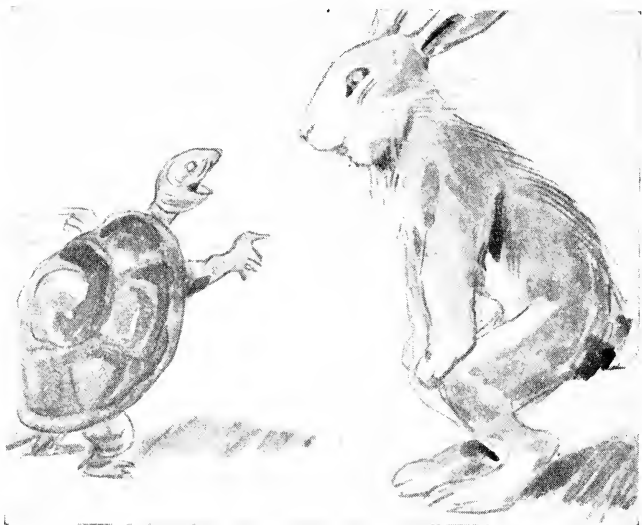


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THE CRAB AND HIS MOTHER

SAID a Crab in tone irate
To her son, "Your sidelong gait
Annoys me; can you not go straight?"
Said the Son, "I'll try, if you
Will show me how." What could she do?
Mother Crab went sideways too!

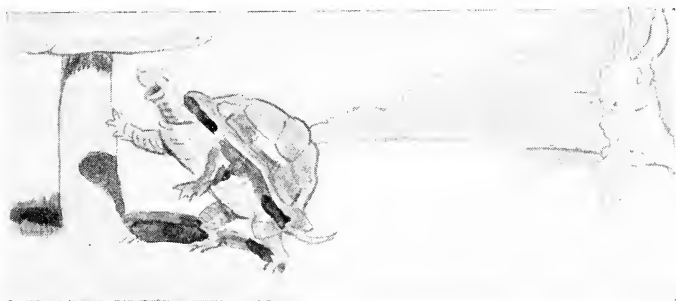


THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

A HARE one day a Tortoise chaffed
On her slow gait. The Tortoise laughed.
“’Tis true I’m slowest of the slow
And you’re the fastest thing I know;
Yet notwithstanding your swift pace,”
Said she, “I’ll beat you in a race.”

The Herford Æsop

The Hare consented, half in jest,
To put the matter to the test,
And off they started. Like a flash,
Half round the course in one swift dash,
Bounded the Hare; then, feeling sure
That victory was now secure,
Sat down to rest—and fell asleep.
Meanwhile his Rival, creep, creep, creep,
Came slowly on, caught up, and passed.
Creep-creep, creep-creep, until at last
The Hare awaking, rubbed his eyes
And saw, to his intense surprise,
The Tortoise, faithful to her boast,
Was waiting at the winning-post.



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THE MILKMAID

A MILKMAID to the market sped,
Her milk pail, balanced on her head,
Brimful of milk fresh from the cow.
And as she went she pondered how
In time, by careful bargaining,
The price that pail of milk would bring
Might make her fortune. "First, I'll get,"
Thought she, "a batch of eggs to set;
And these, when hatched by some good hen,
Will grow to fine, plump chickens; then
At Fair-time, when the price is high,



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I'll sell them for enough to buy
That feathered hat and blue silk gown
I saw the other day in town.
Then, with pink ribbons in my hair,
When Jamie sees me at the Fair
And says he's sorry that he said
The things he did, I'll toss my head
Like this" — She tossed her head—and splash!
Down came the pail of milk, and crash!
Went eggs and chickens; blue silk gown,
Hat, ribbons, all came tumbling down,
And the bright vision of the Fair
And — Jamie — vanished into air!



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THE HARES AND THE FROGS

ONCE all the Hares in Haredom got
Together to bewail their lot,
And one and all agreed that, what
With being hounded, snared and shot,
And chased and worried, life was not
Worth living. So, lest worse befall,
Resolved at once to end it all,
They rushed up a steep rock to throw
Themselves into the lake below.

The Herford Æsop

Hearing them come, the Frogs beside
The water's edge leapt, terrified,
Into the lake. Seeing their fright,
A Hare exclaimed, "Brothers, our plight
Is not so bad; now we have found
A folk who fear the very sound
Of our approach, let us," said he,
"Take courage in the thought that we,
The scorn of Man and Bird and Beast,
Are heroes to the Frogs at least!"



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THE DOG IN THE MANGER

A SELFISH Dog used for his bed
The manger where the Oxen fed,
And while he could not eat the hay
Himself, by growling, drove away
The hungry Oxen. Now, although
That Dog died centuries ago,
His evil name will never be
Forgotten. For when people see
Such selfishness as his, they say,
“Dog in the manger,” to this day.
And of such creatures there are more
That go on two legs than on four!

The Herford Æsop



A FOX AND A CRAB

A FOX in search of food one day
Espied a stranded Crab that lay
Upon the beach. "What luck!" said he,
"A breakfast ready made for me!"
"The luck is yours," the Crab replied;
"Mine left me with the ebbing tide.
Had I been faithful to the sea,
I would not now your breakfast be!"

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THE NURSE AND THE WOLF

A HUNGRY Wolf once paused outside
A cottage where an infant cried,
And, listening, heard the nurse exclaim,
“Be still, you naughty child! For shame!
If you don’t stop at once, I’ll throw
You to the wolf outside.” “Oho!”
Chuckled the Wolf, “how fortunate!
I’ll stay just where I am and wait,
And soon my supper I shall get.”
For all we know, he’s waiting yet.

The Herford Æsop



THE MICE IN COUNCIL

ONCE, in the absence of the Cat,
The Mice in solemn council sat,
Some plan of action to discuss
To curb her practice odious
Of prying into their affairs
And pouncing on them unawares.
After much talk the plan that met
With most approval was to get
A piece of cord and hang thereby
To Pussy's neck, upon the sly,



The Herford Æsop



A bell that would not fail to ring
When Pussy was about to spring,
And so announce her fell intention.
Truly a wonderful invention!
The Mice delightedly agreed;
“Now,” said the Chairman, “all we need
Is someone to attach the bell.”
At this, an awful silence fell
Upon the meeting; no one spoke.
At length a voice the stillness broke,
“I move, since no one seems to yearn
To bell the Cat, that we adjourn.”

The Herford Æsop



THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

A WICKED Wolf once donned the skin
Of a dead Sheep and sô got in
Among the flock, deceiving by
His artifice the shepherd's eye.
All day, secure in his disguise,
He watched his prey with gleaming eyes
And ever growing appetite;
But fate willed otherwise. That night
The careful shepherd, counting o'er

The Herford Æsop

His sheep, discovered one sheep more
Than he possessed, and, looking through
The flock again, he caught and slew
The Wolf and hung him to a tree,
That any passing Sheep might see,
And, having seen, might warn the rest,
“A Wolf’s a Wolf, howe’er he’s dress’d.”





THE CAT, THE MONKEY, AND
THE CHESTNUTS

A MONKEY and a Cat one day
Were sitting by the hearth, where lay
Some Chestnuts roasting. "By the way,"
Exclaimed the Ape, "I never saw
A Cat with such a perfect paw
For pulling Chestnuts from a fire,

The Herford Æsop

And though I always did admire
Our master's hands, yours to the touch
Are softer far!" This was too much
For Pussy. With a flattered "Mew!"
She reached into the fire and drew
A Chestnut out. The hot coals seared
Her paw, but Pussy persevered
Till she had pulled out every one.
Then, turning round to gaze upon
The Chestnuts, found that there were none!
Just empty shells! All Pussy had
Was burns and the reflection sad
That she had singed her paws to feed
Her folly and the Monkey's greed.

The Herford Æsop



THE WOLF AND THE WATCH-DOG

A WOLF who saw a Watch-dog sleek,
Chained in a farmyard, stopped to speak.
“They feed you well,” said he, “’tis plain;
But why that unbecoming chain?”
“Oh, that’s a sort of badge of trust,”
Replied the Dog. “I wear it just
To please the Boss. I scarcely know
I have it on, the thing is so
Extremely light.” “H’m, that may be,”
Returned the Wolf, “but not for me!
I’d rather starve! However light,
A chain would spoil my appetite!”



THE FOX AND THE CROW

A CROW once stole a piece of cheese,
And, to enjoy it at her ease,
Flew to the top of a high tree.
A Fox who, passing, chanced to see,
Resolved to exercise his wit
And win from her the dainty bit
That in her beak she held so tight.

The Herford Æsop



“My dear,” said he, with smile polite,
“I never was aware till now
How perfect is your form, nor how
Superb your plumage. Had your voice
An equal charm, I should rejoice
To hear you sing!” At that the Crow,
Parting her beak to sing, let go
The piece of cheese and saw the prize
Snapped up before her very eyes,
And heard the Fox’s parting jeer—
“Don’t trouble now to *caw*, my dear!”

The Herford Æsop

THE STAR GAZER

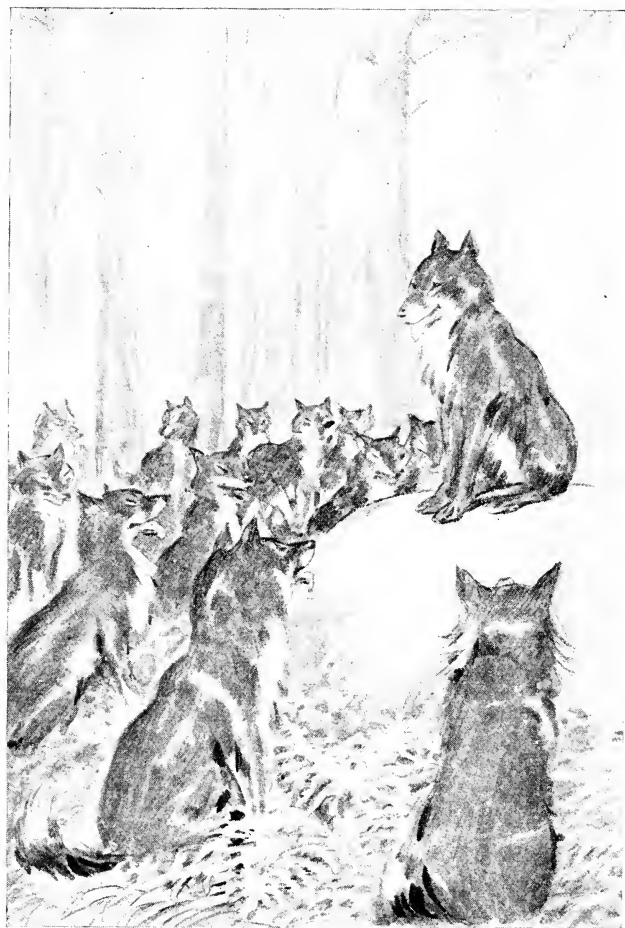
A WISE Old Man whose chief delight
Was studying the stars at night,
One evening, gazing at the sky,
With head thrown back and chin held high,
Picking out just which star was which,
Stumbled and fell into a ditch.
Chancing to hear the Old Man's cry
A Stranger who was passing by
Beheld his plight and drawing near
Addressed him thus: "My friend, I fear
That when at night you walk about
With face uplifted, picking out
This star and that, you overlook
A planet, which, tho' in your book,
You will not see howe'er you try
By looking for it in the sky;
A planet you will find well worth
Your while to watch — 'tis called THE EARTH."

The Herford Æsop



THE FOX THAT LOST HIS TAIL

A FOX, once in a trap caught fast,
Managed, by tugging hard, at last
To free himself, only to find
He'd left his precious tail behind.
Here was a pretty state of things!
Exposed to all the shafts and stings
Of ridicule and malice too,
What in the world was he to do?
One day he hit upon a plan.
Calling a meeting of the clan,
He made a speech and thus began,
“Dear fellow Foxes! I regret
To see that you are wearing yet



The Herford Æsop

That relic of antiquity
The TAIL. In good society
It is no longer *comme il faut*,*
And Human Beings long ago
Discarded it. 'Tis an offense
Against both Style and Common Sense.
Take my advice, don't hesitate,
Cut off your tails before too late!"
Ere he could say another word,
'Mid cries of "foolish! mad! absurd!"
Rose an old Fox; "I beg to state,"
Said he, "we should attach more weight
To your advanced and lofty views
Had you yourself a tail to lose!"

* French for "as it should be." Pronounced *käm eel foe*.



THE QUACK FROG

A FROG once made a proclamation
To all the creatures in creation
That, having taken the degree
Doctor of Medicine — (M. D.),
It gave him pleasure to assure
The World that he could quickly cure,
By means of a prescription rare,
All ills to which the flesh is heir.
“Then,” said the Fox, “my learned friend,
Since to heal others you pretend,
Why is it that you don’t begin
On your lame gait and wrinkled skin?”

The Herford Æsop



THE FOUR BULLS AND THE LION

ONCE on a time four Bulls agreed
To herd together and to feed
In the same pasture. Crouched near by,
A Lion watched, but dared not try
His strength against four Bulls combined:
And so by craft he undermined
Their friendship, sowing seeds of hate
And causing them to separate
And graze in fields apart. This done,
He feasted on them one by one.

The Herford Æsop



THE LIONESS

ONCE the wilderness was rent
With a storm of argument.
Never was there such a din!
All the animals joined in,
Big and little, as they tried
This Great Question to decide,
Which of them could mother be
To the largest family.
When convinced at last that they
Could not settle it that way,
To the Lioness they went.

The Herford Æsop

“Pray decide our argument;
But,” said they, “before you do,
Tell how many cubs have you.”
“Well!” replied the Lioness,
“Since you ask me, I confess
I have only one; but why on
Numbers dwell? That one’s a LION.”



The Herford Æsop



THE SHEPHERD BOY AND THE WOLF

A SHEPHERD Lad who loved his joke
Was wont to scare the village folk
By shouting, every now and then,
“Help! Wolf!” and laughing rudely when
They ran, in answer to his call,
To find there was no wolf at all.
The best of jokes, however, must
If played too often cause distrust.
So, when one day there came indeed
A Wolf, the neighbors paid no heed.
“The Shepherd’s at his tricks again!”
Said they, and so he called in vain.
Meanwhile, to point a moral deep,
The Wolf devoured all his sheep.

The Herford Æsop



THE FOX, THE LION, AND THE ASS

ONCE on a time it came to pass
The Fox, the Lion, and the Ass
Agreed to hunt in company.

The hunting over — when the three
Viewed the result, well satisfied —
The Lion bade the Ass divide
The spoil. So, wishing to be fair,

The Herford Æsop

The Ass gave each an equal share.
Straightway the Lion, who could see
No virtue in equality,
Declared the judgment void and ate
The Judge. Warned by the Ass's fate,
The Fox exclaimed with ready wit,
"The Lion's share is — *all of it!*"
"Right!" roared the Lion. "Come now, tell
Who taught you to divide so well?"
"It was," replied the Fox, "alas!
Our late lamented friend, the Ass!"



The Herford Æsop

THE LION AND THE MOUSE

A LITTLE Mouse, who chanced to stray
Near where a sleeping Lion lay,
Forgetting all that Prudence taught,
Ventured too rashly — and was caught.
“O Lion! spare my life, I pray!”
Pleaded the Mouse, “I will repay
Your kindness without fail.” And so
The Lion laughed and let him go.
The Mouse, soon after this mishap,
Came on the Lion in a trap,
Bound by strong ropes; without ado
He set to work and gnawed them through.
“A thousand thanks!” the Lion cried.
“You’ve saved my life and shamed my Pride.
For tho’ it’s true I am a King,
Position is not everything.
I owe my life to your quick Wit!”
“Pray,” said the Mouse, “don’t mention it.”



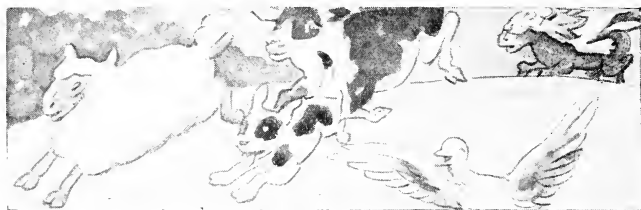
THE TOWN MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE

A COUNTRY Mouse once asked a friend
Who lived in Town to come and spend
The day, and breathe his country air,
And taste his simple country fare.
But simple fare like cheese and rye
And oatmeal failed to satisfy
The City Mouse's pampered taste.
"Your life, my friend, is going to waste
In this outlandish hole," said he.
"Come into Town and visit me —
And I will show you how (forgive

The Herford Æsop

Plain speech) a gentlemouse should live.”
His host accepted with delight,
So off they set and that same night,
Arriving at the city house,
Sat down to dine. The Country Mouse,
Bewildered, scarce believed his eyes,
For here were almonds, nuts and pies,
Honey and custard, cream and cake,
And — “What’s that noise? For mercy’s sake!”
The Country Mouse exclaimed in fright,
As through the floor with all their might
They scampered, panting, out of breath.
“It almost frightened me to death!”
“Oh, that —” explained the City Mouse,
“That is the Man who shares my house;
But he won’t hurt you —” “That may be,”
Replied the guest, “but not for me
This whirl of cake and custard gay;
It is not worth the price you pay.
I’m just as much obliged, but I
Prefer the Simple Life — Good-by!”

The Herford Æsop



THE DONKEY IN THE LION'S SKIN

ONCE a Donkey, wondering
How it felt to be a King,
Donned a Lion's skin he found
Left by hunters on the ground.
Thus in Regal Robe arrayed,
All the other Beasts, dismayed
When they saw him coming, fled,
Save the Fox, who laughed and said,
"You're no Lion, that I know
By your voice, my friend, for tho'
I've seen some Lions in my day,
I've yet to hear a Lion bray!"



The Herford Æsop



THE WOLF AND THE CRANE

A WOLF who had the habit rude
Of bolting greedily his food,
When eating a quick lunch one day,
Swallowed a bone that stuck halfway,
Causing such agonizing pain
He sent in haste for Doctor Crane,

The Herford Æsop

And offered him a handsome fee
To pull the bone out instantly.
The Crane at once with ease and skill
Plucked out the bone. But when his Bill
For Payment Due he then presented,
The Wolf his impudence resented.
Quoth he, "A Crane's well paid that draws
His head in safety from my jaws."



The Herford Æsop



THE GOOSE THAT LAID THE GOLDEN EGG

A FARMER once a Goose possessed
That laid each morning in her nest
A Golden Egg, to him, indeed,
A fortune. Yet such was his greed
He grew in time suspicious lest

The Herford Æsop

One Egg per day were not the best
The Goose could do. "I'm satisfied,"
Said he, "she has in her inside,
A mint of Gold." And so the dunce,
Thinking to get it all at once,
Killed her and found to his chagrin
Just flesh and feathers, bones and skin,
And other things no earthly use
To anyone except a Goose.



The Herford Æsop



THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

A HUNGRY Wolf in search of prey
Once chanced to meet a Lamb, astray,
And seeking, for appearance' sake,
A Plausible Excuse to take
Its life, addressed it thus, "I hear
You slandered me one day last year."



The Herford Æsop

“I?” cried the Lamb, “indeed, sir, no!

I was not born a year ago!”

“Well,” snapped the Wolf, “I understand
You eat the grass upon my land.”

“You are mistaken, sir, I am

Too young for grass,” replied the Lamb.

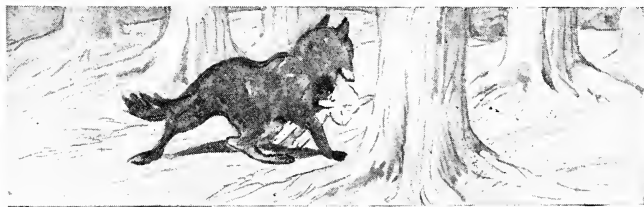
“No matter!” growled the Wolf, “one thing
I know, you drink from out my Spring.”

Once more the Lamb the charge denied.

“Milk is my only food,” he cried.

“Well, mine is Lamb! So now I’ll sup!”

Shouted the Wolf — and ate him up.





THE FARMER AND HIS SONS

AN AGED Farmer, fearing lest
His land, when he was laid to rest,
Might lie untilled ; before he died
Summoned his sons to his bedside
And told them that a Treasure rare
Was buried in a field somewhere.
No sooner was he laid away
Than setting to, without delay
His sons plowed up each field with care,
To find at last the Treasure rare
Was not a chest with guineas filled
But rich crops from the land they tilled.

The Herford Æsop

THE ARAB AND HIS CAMEL

A CAMEL standing in the cold
Outside an Arab's tent made bold
To ask if he might put his head
Inside the door. "Why, surely," said
The Arab. "Well, since you're so kind,"
Resumed the Camel, "would you mind
If I should put my neck in too?"
The Arab smiled assent. "Pray do!"
The Camel thanked him and complied,
Remarking as he pushed inside,
"Far be it from me to presume,
But could you for my knees make room?"
"Aye!" cried the man, "without a doubt!"
"Well," said the Camel, "how about
My hind legs? Standing halfway through
Keeps the door open." "Very true;
Come in and close the flap," replied
The kindly Arab. Once inside

The Herford Æsop

The Camel found it cramped. "Dear me!
This tent's too small for two!" cried he,
"I *must* have room to turn about!"
With that he pushed the Arab out.

THE MISER

THERE was a Miser once who sold
His birthright for a lump of gold
And hid the lump of gold away
In a deep hole, to which each day
He came to feast his eyes upon
His treasure. — *One day it was gone.*
A thief had found the hiding-place
And helped himself and left no trace.
The miser raved and tore his hair.
A neighbor, marking his despair,
Counseled him thus: "Pray why be sad
At losing what you never had?
Your lump of gold, you can't deny,
Was only worth what it would buy.

The Herford Æsop

Go get a stone of equal size
And weight, then, if you shut your eyes,
For all the good you'll get of it
That stone will serve you every bit
As well, for with it can be bought
All *you* would buy — and that is naught!”

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CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S





